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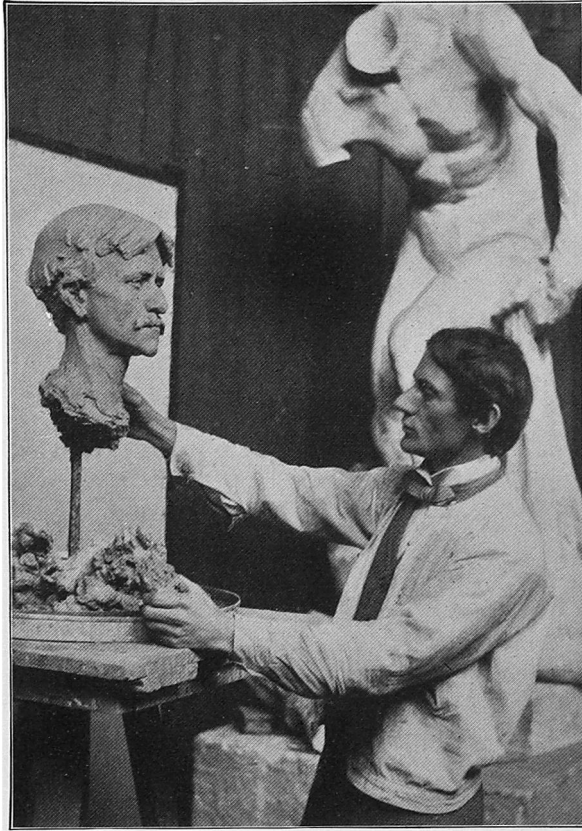
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PORTRAIT OF CHAS. GRAFLY WORKING ON BUST OF MR. HUGH BRECKENRIDGE, ARTIST

CHARLES GRAFLY SCULPTOR

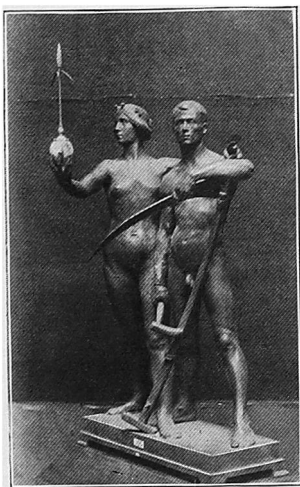
I wanted to know Mr. Grafly. In fact I told them there at the Pennsylvania Academy the other day that the chief inducement for making the long trip to Philadelphia was the prospect of meeting him and that brilliant painter-lady, Cecilia Beaux.

Those things that Mr. Grafly has been sending to our autumn exhibitions for the last two or three years have been so interesting and so superbly modeled that I had mentally classified their maker as a "big man." This was evidently the current opinion likewise at the academy where he teaches, but his associates seemed pleased to hear their estimate confirmed.

He was out just then; but would probably be back soon, they said. They were mistaken about his being away, for I had just passed him

in the vestibule outside and felt sure that it was he. Oh, no! I never had seen a picture of him, nor heard any description, excepting the rather sketchy and indefinite one from an old comrade of his who had observed that he was "a good fellow." I merely recognized him from his work, and felt instinctively that he was a sculptor. We always know our "kind."

Perhaps my greetings were over-effusive. I was thinking of the splendid backs of his figures in the group of last year, "The Symbol of Life." His response was cordial, though a shade more cautious.



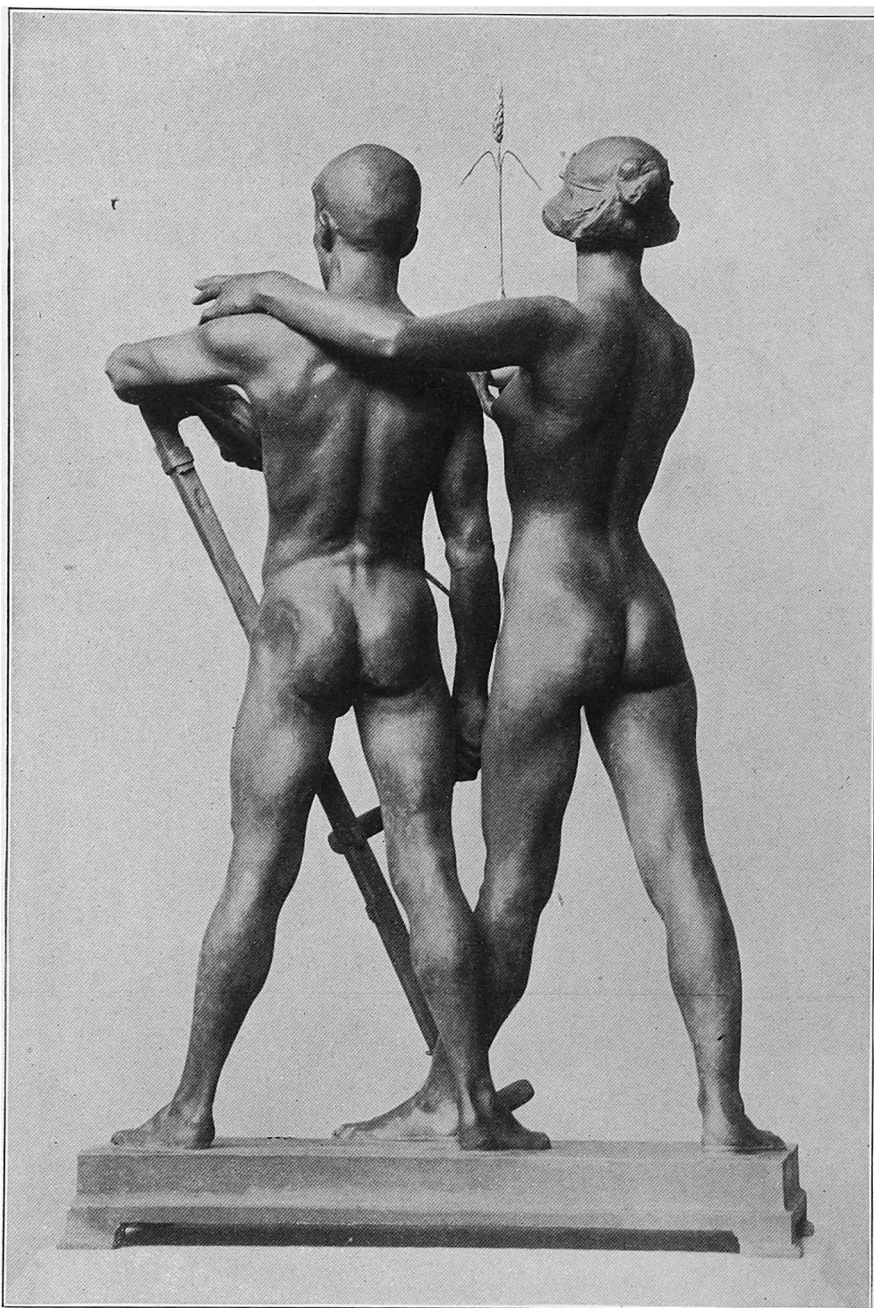
SYMBOL OF LIFE. BRONZE

He did not know my modeling. I had thought of this in advance, and considered it on the whole a fortunate circumstance. You see we are rather queer about such things. In measuring "other folks" our standards are the conventional ones, and we are sane and reasonable enough; but when a brother artist is under consideration the question is, What can he do? and, How does he do it? I realize the absurdity of it, but it is a fact that we are weakly prone to estimate a man altogether from the standpoint of his "execution." Unless we deliberately stop and adjust our moral "specs" we are likely to rank technique above either character or mental power. Good construction and "planes" are the essential things; a surface well modeled *à la boulette* will hide a multitude of sins.

However, this little confession is entirely irrelevant and appears here only for the good reason that it has just occurred to me.

We were to serve upon the jury together, and a very pleasant time we had of it, assorting the sheep and the goats. The Pennsylvania Academy is one of the few institutions making any notable effort to encourage sculpture, and as a result its exhibit in that department is the most important in the country excepting the triennials of the National Sculpture Society. It was a great chance for getting acquainted, this jury work side by side, with the triumphs of all our brethren as our prey. A single word or gesture would often express a volume of admiration or the contrary, and in ten minutes I felt that I knew Mr. Grafly's attitude toward contemporaneous art.

It had not taken that long even to convince me of his strong personality, and that the things which he has exhibited are nothing in comparison with the works of which he is capable. In the rotunda there stood before me an evidence of his ambition in the form of a



SYMBOL OF LIFE. BRONZE
BY CHARLES GRAFLY

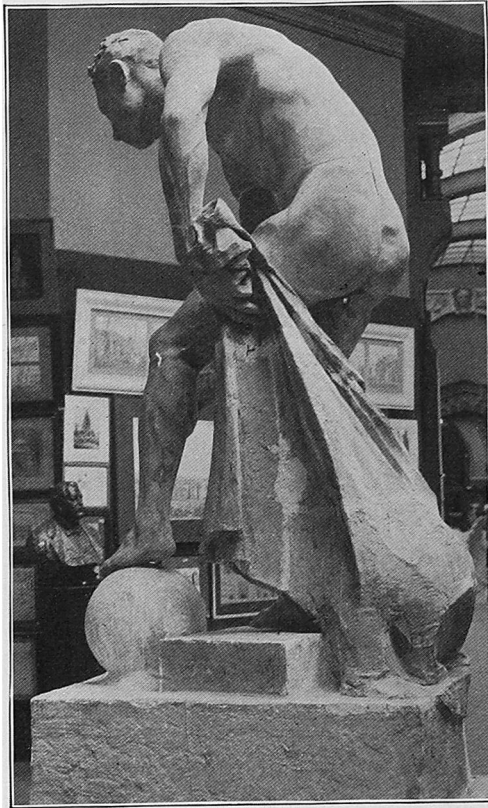
figure of heroic size. "The Vulture of War" is a magnificent fragment of a great group, one of those dreams which come to young artists, and which none but young artists ever have the courage to undertake. This group of War as planned by Mr. Grafly is to consist of four figures, how arranged I know not. I only know that it would be of great size and most impressive—the single figure gives assurance of this. It was born and brought to light in a little studio of the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, in Paris, during the winter of 1895. Asked if he expected to complete the group, the sturdy toiler replied, "Some time, when—you know when."

Oh yes, I know when—the same time when my great works are to be done—when we have money enough to translate our dreams into realities.

I am betraying no secret of the jury when I recall the fact that a little reduction of this figure mystified us all at the last exhibit of the National Sculpture Society. We could find no name on it, and many were the guesses as to its author. The fact is, there were very few sculptors in the land to whom we could attribute it—now I *am* growing indiscreet!—for the work

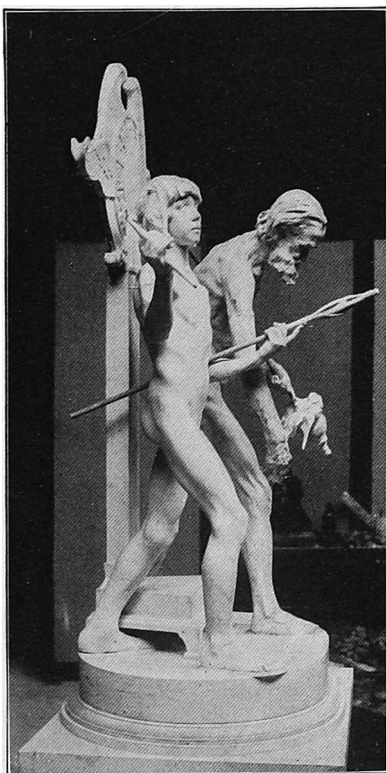
was too strong, too masterly for any but the very greatest. Most of us were inclined to believe it a cast from some foreign sculpture, possibly of another century, though I remember hearing with pride the name of our own MacNeil coupled with it.

In another hall of the academy stood that strange and impressive group, "The Symbol of Life," which Mr. Grafly sent to our exhibition a year ago. I told him half jestingly that I could forgive the symbolism for the sake of the modeling. I could not fathom its meaning



THE VULTURE OF WAR. FRAGMENT

very readily, so did not try; the modeling of those splendid bodies was a language more intelligible to me, and has given me a great amount of pleasure. I have never passed the group without walking around it, and around again, so big and masterly is its workmanship. I don't know why he made the splendid woman larger than her companion; I don't know why he gave her that ungraceful pose, except



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

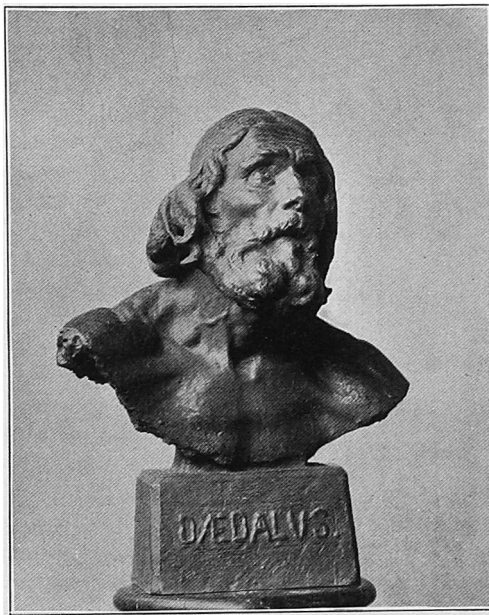
that they may keep step; I don't know what that thing in her hand means, the globe of ivory and the stalk of wheat, and I don't want to know. I positively decline to enjoy my art with a guide book or a "key," but I glory in the construction of those two figures; the bigness of handling; the gravity of the faces and dignity of carriage; the hanging of the flesh upon the bones; the sinuous flow of the surface, so contrasting in the two; the power and the subtlety of modeling of all things essential, and the noble disregard of impertinent and importunate details. I delight in the very way in which the nails are not done. This is great work, and though I prefer for my part a more solid mass, a suggestion of the stone, rather than bronze treatment, I envy the man who made this little masterpiece.

No less wonderful in its modeling is the group of this year, "From Generation to Generation." It is even more cut up in mass, but the figures in themselves are simple and in every way admirable. Again we can pardon the leaning toward symbolism; it is but a faint flavor here, and we are rather glad to discover it, because it enables us to recognize the artist in his work. It is Mr. Grafly and no other. His personality reveals itself in these extraordinary groups. It is with real interest that we shall look forward now to his next year's *envoi*. We may count securely upon some notable creation born of his brooding fancy and compelled into forms responsive by his wonderworking hand.

I got him to tell me a little about himself. He was born in Philadelphia, December 3, 1862. His parents were of Quaker extraction.

He attended public school in his native city until seventeen years of age, when he entered a stone-carving establishment in order to gain practical knowledge of the sculptor's craft. He remained there for five years, reproducing in marble a number of figures. During this time he attended the art schools of the Spring Garden Institution. In 1884 Mr. Grafly was admitted to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he studied modeling and painting under Thomas Eakins, and beguiled odd hours with anatomical research and practical dissections.

In 1888 we find him in Paris, that Mecca of the modern art student, the place where all good sculptors go when they are alive. At first



DÆDALUS, BY CHARLES GRAFLY

at Julien's, where he was under the inspiring influence of Chapu in sculpture, and no less famous professors in drawing, he turned later to the *École des Beaux Arts*, remaining there until the spring of 1890. At the salon of that year he made his *début* with two heads, "Dædalus" and "St. John." The "Dædalus," which we reproduce, was afterward exhibited in Philadelphia, awarded honorable mention by the Temple Trust Fund, purchased and cast in bronze by the Pennsylvania Academy, and placed in its permanent collection.

A busy summer in this country was followed by a glad return to

Paris in the autumn. The harvest of the winter of 1890-91 was a life size nude female figure, "Mauvais Présage," which was accorded "mention honorable" in the salon of '91. This figure is now in the possession of the Detroit Museum of Art.

About this time Mr. Grafly received his call to the chair of sculpture in the Academy and also in Drexel Institute. By way of preparation he visited the principal art centers and schools of Europe before returning to America. In 1893 his exhibit of the above

works at the Columbian Exposition won him a medal, and in 1895 his admirable bust of his mother, modeled in 1892, brought him another from Atlanta. The same year gave him a second prize from the South, when Miss Francis Sekeles, of Corinth, Mississippi, united her fortunes with his. The story of their first meeting in Paris is pretty, but they did not say that I could tell that. Another winter now in Paris, and the great "Vulture of War" is the result. Since that time Mr. Grafly has resided in Philadelphia, occupied with his teaching and the execution of various commissions, not forgetting, however, the more important groups which were not commissions. His busts are notable achievements, every one of them. In some respects that of his mother seems to me the greatest of them all, but the portraits of his wife and of Mrs.



PORTRAIT OF
MRS. WYLLYS K. INGERSOLL

Ingersoll rank among the really fine sculptures of America.

Mr. Grafly is engaged at present upon a colossal portrait of the late Admiral David D. Porter, U. S. N., which is to be placed on the Smith Memorial in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

The independence and sturdiness of the young artist's mind, as well as a glimpse of his ideals, were brought out forcibly by a little incident which befell us as we traversed the corridors of the academy together.

We came all at once upon a certain bust by one of our most eminent sculptors, a famous portrait of a great general. It is intensely alive, and the unexpected *rencontre* was like suddenly meeting a real man of powerful and impressive personality, face to face. I had seen

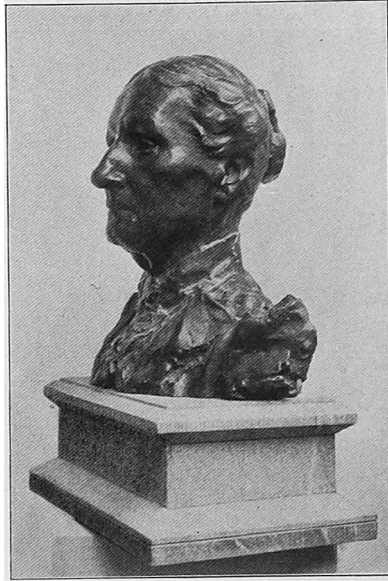
the bust some twelve years ago, and it was a pleasant surprise to find it here. I expressed my admiration, comparing the head with a lot of insipid copies from the antique ranged on either hand, which it dominated splendidly.

"Yes," said he, after a moment's pause, "it's great, but the worst of these has a quality which I admire, and which it lacks."

I have seldom ventured to criticise the master, but I felt and saw what the young artist meant. The "live" bust had gained its insistent vitality through a sacrifice of the surface charm which marks all great sculptural works of the past—of that quality which Olin Warner among American sculptors has best understood and illustrated—the suavity and flow of forms without abruptness; the coating of atmosphere with which a skilled artist seems to envelop his work; yes, and which he kneads into the very substance of the unwilling marble. It might almost be called bas-relief treatment in the shadows, but that all forms remain strong and full in relief, like the much lauded preacher who "often rose above his average, but never fell below it." This "sense of the whole," and tender play of light and shade over a large mass, this refinement of transitions (that's what I mean, though it is not any more intelligible) is quite lacking in the bust of the nervous, restless, old general.

The handling is all "*staccato*." The chin is aggressive, the tight mouth defiant, the nose inquiring, the eye like an eagle's; the beard is short and stubbly, the hair writhes and twists from very virility; the coat lapels are angular and stand out sharply; even the buttons seem proud of their relationship. Quite in harmony with these features is the play of vivid lights and shadows over its surface. They are restless and keen, abrupt to picturesqueness. If ever there were excuse for deserting the traditions of classic art, and italicizing a character, for punctuating with hammer strokes its personality, it was in the case of this intense, irrepressible, "driving" nineteenth-century American. Praxiteles could not have done him. It is a great bust, but it is not Mr. Grafly's idea of sculpture.

That he consistently lives up to his own high standard is proven



PORTRAIT OF MY MOTHER

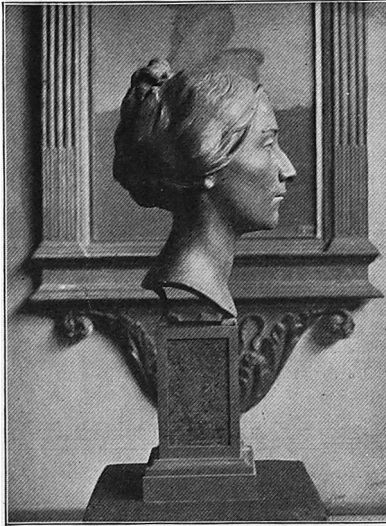
by the remarkable works which we have been able to give with this paper. These busts would win respect in any exhibition in the world. There is no museum which would not welcome the two groups, those strange, perplexing fancies of his, which he silhouettes so strongly upon our memories that they cannot be put away.

"How can you afford to do such things?" said I. "The models must cost a small fortune, and the bronze casting as much more. You have no orders for them—"

"Of course not; nobody wants that sort of a thing. I do it to keep my hand in and—because I must."

I have heard smaller men excuse themselves for mediocre and slovenly work in the same words, but this was really refreshing, to hear a man acknowledge that work of this high order was done under stress of necessity. Happy fellow, thought I, to be obliged to do great things like these every year—I wish that I *had* to!

Then came to my mind the words of a distinguished friend, a great artist, though still young, who had remarked to me but a few days before, "There are a hundred sculptors in New York City, two of them artists." I thought at the time that I would have been more generous; there must be at least twice that many "righteous men" among them, but the distinction which he had



PORTRAIT OF MRS. CHAS. GRAFLY

made impressed me very much. Happy this man of quiet Philadelphia town; the commercial spirit has never gotten hold of him! His time is not spent in pulling wires for jobs, in figuring percentages with dishonest committeemen. He has no great shop with a lot of clever underlings to turn out work for him. He does not keep a man "on the road" as certain of our "successful" sculptors of the metropolis are said to do. It would not occur to him to make a plausible sketch-model to catch a committee, and then to economize on the final execution, giving mean results to disappointed clients, but making good profits for himself.

To the true artist art is a sacred thing. Can you imagine St. Gaudens slighting a piece of work? When after years of study and best endeavor he puts forth to the world a new achievement, it means that it is of his best; he has done all that he knows how. He is will-

ing that it shall be counted in the final summation of his life's work. So it is with Daniel French and Herbert Adams and George Barnard.

Of the same stuff is Charles Grafly. Nothing would tempt him to neglect his work. It would be an impossibility for a man of his makeup. He knows what is right and so shall it be done. When an artist has taste and is in love with his daily task, and when his greatest horror is an art that is slouchy and dishonest, how can he go far astray?

This is the kind of artistic conscience that we need. Let's see if we cannot get ours regulated and brought up to this standard. A little group of men like Mr. Grafly, a half-dozen sculptors or a half-dozen painters, consecrated to their art and united in purpose, could make our city famous the world over; even as has been done in Glasgow. It is coming—but I wander; I am writing about Charles Grafly, of Philadelphia. Well, mark my words, that young man is destined to become a famous sculptor in a time when the title will not be so lightly bestowed as in the past.

Yes, I am convinced that he is a "big man." LORADO TAFT.



PORTRAIT RELIEF
BY CHARLES GRAFLY